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REPORT OF US AIR FORCE OFFICER - FORMERLY PRISONER IN NORTH KOREA

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Col Kingsbury, members of the staff, and students of the Survival School, I will briefly give you the story of what happened to me, and then I will try to give you a few pointers of what I think you should do in order to survive in case you go down in enemy territory.

I was flying F-51's on August 17th, and we were strafing enemy positions about 40 miles inside enemy territory. My cooling system was shot out and I didn't quite make it back to friendly territory. I belly landed about 5 miles inside the front lines, and the area that I belly landed into was full of North Korean troops. This same area was the area that was later bombed to hell by the B-29's when the UN Forces started their offensive in September. Immediately after getting out of the airplane, the field was surrounded and they continued to fire out over my head at the wreckage and I crawled a couple of hundred yards away from the scene of the accident before I was finally captured. I was taken into the hills about 3 to 5 miles from the scene of the accident, and they held me there for 2 days and nights. They kept me pretty well tied up and guarded during this time. They wired my hands and feet together with wire and actually had me tied to a tree during hours of darkness, in daylight they would untie me, but I was pretty well guarded, and my chances of escaping at that time

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CHARLES A. K. INNES-TAYLOR  
AO 482865  
Co. 3904th Training Squadron

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were, you might say nil. I underwent quite a bit of interrogation during this period of time. They expected me to know the position of all of our ground force troops and our artillery around the city of Taegu. They had high hopes of taking the city of Taegu and ending the war within a couple of weeks. Remember that at this time we were holding a very small piece of ground beginning at Taegu, on down along the Nantong River down to the Pusan beach head.

After two days and nights in the hills they decided to take me to Seoul. They told me that they were holding quite a few American prisoners in Seoul, and on the third night of my capture I met a Corporal that had been held prisoner there in the hills for 29 days. He had been captured during the fall of Taejon about the 20th of July. The two of us started marching, and a few hours after our beginning to march on the first night, we ran into about half a dozen South Korean prisoners and they tied us all together. There were 8 of us and they tied a rope around our wrist and our body, and we had about 6 or 8 guards for the 8 prisoners, so you see even then they were making pretty damn sure that none of us got away. After 2 or 3 nights of marching we ran into a group of 35 American prisoners and 8 more South Korean prisoners. Together we all went to Seoul, and we arrived in Seoul on the 28th of August. At this time the weather was very good. It was pretty hot during the day but the nights were not very cold, and we were not suffering any at all from the elements. The

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mosquitos however, were giving us quite a fit at night. We were being fed green apples and a hand full of rice and a little soup each day. Some of the ground force prisoners that had already been captured some 15 or 20 days at this time had already begun to get in pretty poor physical condition. A lot of them had already contracted dysentery. We spend about 3 weeks in Seoul, we were held in a large school building on the south side of the city. While we were there we did our own cooking, we had a little kitchen set up. We would build a fire, and had a couple of big black pots. They gave us vegetables, a few dried fish, and we would make a soup twice a day, and they brought bread baked in the city and gave us two pieces each day. We received some medical attention while we were in Seoul - it was very crude, but quite a few of the fellows had been wounded in action prior to their being captured. They painted these wounds and bandaged them up, and they actually had a powder that was supposed to help the people with the GI's. I don't think it actually did any good - some of these fellows were taking this stuff every day but I don't think it had any medical value what so ever.

We heard the naval bombardment of Inchon about the 15th or 16th of September, and we were pretty sure that the UN Forces were making a landing at Inchon, and that we would be liberated within a few days. We actually made some plans as to how we were going to take over the

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prison when we found out for sure that the American troops were coming in. We had a feeling that maybe the North Koreans would turn their guns on us and maybe try to wipe us all out before, rather than let us be taken away from them by the American troops. However, we had plans set up to where we were going to try and take over. However, on the night of September 20th, on the spur of the moment, they made us all fall out of the building and they told us we were all going to be taken to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. At this time, we had 376 prisoners. I was the only Air Force man in the group - all the rest of them were army prisoners. 2 or 3 days later after we left Seoul, we picked up 3 Marine Corps fellows that had been captured during the invasion at Inchon, and that was how we definitely found out that an invasion had come off at Inchon. We were told that we were being taken out of the battle area for our own safety. We were also told that in Pyongyang they had much better facilities for taking care of prisoners. At that time they said they had some 2000 American prisoners in Pyongyang. We knew that there had been one large group of prisoners that had gone through Seoul and had already gone up further north before our group got there. One Air Force prisoner in this group was a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] - a B-29 crew had had to bail out somewhere up in North Korea and [REDACTED] had been captured. While I was a prisoner in the hills before I got to Seoul, they had showed me a picture of

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[REDACTED] and several of the other prisoners that were being held in Seoul. Also, upon our arrival there the blackboards in each of the classrooms that the prisoners were being held in were full of names of fellows that had been there and had already been taken on to Pyongyang or some place in North Korea. We started marching that night, and we were told that we only had to march a short distance. Although only one man had died while we were in Seoul, there were quite a few of the fellows that were getting in pretty bad condition by that time and we knew that a large percent of the fellows would never be able to make the 200 miles march to Pyongyang. Well we didn't see a train that night and we marched some 32 miles. We marched from 9 o'clock in the evening until about 9 o'clock the next morning. The next morning we were spotted by a flight of 2 Marine Corsairs and we were out in a wide open space and we expected to be strafed, but we all waved our rags or anything that we could get our hands on, and these Marine pilots looked us over very carefully and when they returned to their base they reported some 300 American prisoners were marching northward on the road leading north out of Seoul. After that we were spotted several times and actually on one occasion a C-47 dropped 36 cases of "C" rations and fresh water to us, but the North Korean guards took it away from us after we had gathered it up. They did give us one Chesterfield cigarette each. During the 19 days march from Seoul

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to Pyongyang, 80 of our prisoners died or were killed. I don't remember the exact figure but I would say 12 to 15 became so weak that they could not walk under their own power so they were shot by the guards and left by the roadside. 15 others, or 16 others were killed by a flight of F-80's that spotted 15 oxcarts that we had put some of the fellows that were in pretty bad condition on. These oxcarts got about 10 or 15 miles up the road ahead of the main column and early one morning, actually it was on the morning of October 8th, this flight of F-80's spotted us and gave us a working over and 15 of the 50 men in the group were killed and several others were wounded pretty badly. Another time F-80's struck one of the school buildings that we were being held in and one man was killed. The rest of the men died of dysentery. There were 2 or 3 cases of pneumonia, but our biggest enemy was dysentery.

We arrived in Pyongyang on the 9th of October. As we entered the city, a Russian jeep, driven by a North Korean soldier, with a couple of Russian officers in the back seat rode by our column and the two Russian officers shook their fists in our faces as they went by. That pissed us off - we didn't like it very much. There wasn't very much we could do about it at the time though. Well, as we entered the city we saw a large Korean hospital, and there were a number of North Korean wounded soldiers running around outside all bandaged up, and we thought we might be able to get some medical attention after we

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got set up in our quarters. We finally reached a large school building in the middle of the city and they put us in about 4 different rooms. We were pretty well crowded in there. If we all tried to lie down at one time we were packed in there like a bunch of sardines in a can. It was beginning to get pretty chilly at night though, and at least being crowded together like this we were able to keep fairly warm at night. Most of us were pretty poorly clothed. I was wearing a summer weight flying suit only. The Koreans had taken our shoes away from us immediately after we were captured, and quite a few of us were barefooted and the rest of us had received an old pair of rubber sneakers in exchange for our GI shoes. We had practically worn those out though by the time we walked from Seoul to Pyongyang in them. After we arrived there the next day a North Korean Colonel and a Major came to talk to Major McDaniels, who was the ranking American officer in the group. He called 3 or 4 officers down into this office and we had quite a long talk to him. We begged him to let us put some of our sick people into this hospital we had seen, but they absolutely refused to give us any medical attention whatsoever. We asked about the other prisoners that were supposed to have been in Pyongyang. They told us that there had been a large group of prisoners there but they had already been moved northward towards the Manchurian border. They told us that we would not stay in Pyongyang very long, that we would also be moved further north within a few days. Meanwhile quite a few of the people in Pyongyang seemed quite friendly towards these American prisoners. During the

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first 4 days we were there we lost 15 men due to dysentery, and we were allowed to take these fellows out to a cemetery about half a mile away to bury them. They usually sent 6 or 8 men along with 2 or 3 guards to dig a grave and some of the natives would come out and help the fellows dig and bring them food and cigarettes, and the guards didn't mind them talking, and during this time the natives began to slip some of the leaflets that the B-29's had been dropping all over town. These leaflets were messages from General MacArthur and they contained a map of Korea showing the progress that had been made up to that time. I believe the date on these leaflets was 8th of October. At that time the American troops had already crossed the 38th parallel and we felt that it would not be very much longer before they liberated the city of Pyongyang and we would be back in American hands again. Well, during this same time some of the civilian populace of the town were allowed to come into the school yard and talk to us. We were allowed to sit outdoors in the sunshine for 2 or 3 hours each morning while details of prisoners cleaned up the rooms in the school building that we slept in. In this way, sympathetic North Koreans arranged for several of us to escape, actually they wanted Major McDaniels and one other man and Sgt Kumagia who spoke very fluent Japanese. His mother and father were Japanese and he had been born in Hawaii. It was

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They said they expect-

ed the city to be liberated on or about the 20th October, and this was about the 11th or 12th of October. We found out on the afternoon of October 14th that we were going to move out by train that night, so as soon as it began to get dark the 3 of us

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We had been saving pieces of bread and bits of food for 3 or 4 days and we had managed to get hold of 3 or 4 glass bottles and we filled these bottles with water and we intended to stay hidden until the American troops arrived, that is - if we weren't discovered. Even if we received no outside help at all we figured we could hold out for a week or even 10 days, and we felt like the American troops would be in the city by that time. The same afternoon 5 other prisoners had gone out to bury a man that had died that morning, and they had escaped from their guards on the way back to the prison camp that night and hid out in a vacated Korean house. These men actually ran down the middle of town and ran right into a North Korean road block but it was dark enough so that you could not recognise people at any great distance, and several of the boys yelled "Hongo" which meant "air-raid" in Korean, and when they did that everyone ducked and they ran right through the road block and got into this vacated Korean house and stayed there for 6 days and nights and were

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never discovered. They lived off of a bag of flour and a jug of water that had been left in the house. They mixed water with the flour and ate it and that is all they had to eat for 6 days. The

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Korean sympathizers came and brought us 3 or 4 blankets and a couple of jugs of water, and that night they came back again and brought fried potato cakes. A couple of days later they brought some rice and parched corn, and they kept us pretty well informed as to the position of the American troops. They told us on the first day that they came to see us that the troops were 60 miles away, and a couple of days later that they were 38 miles and next day 25, and the next day they were 12 miles away. Well on the 5th day I heard a liaison type airplane buzzing around overhead and we began to hear artillery and we felt pretty sure that it would just be another day or so. We heard machine gun fire all that night and until about 9 o'clock the next morning. All of a sudden everything was quiet and bells began to ring all over town, and pretty soon our fellows that had been taking care of us came and told us that the North Koreans had evacuated the city. I wrote a note and gave it to one of these fellows and told him to go find some American troops and bring them back and for him to lead the American troops to our hiding place.

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He was gone about 3 hours and came back and said he couldn't find any American troops, but the city was occupied by South Korean troops, which was actually the case. The Americans had not yet entered the city and the South Koreans had actually taken over the city by themselves. We decided to come out anyway, it was about 1 o'clock in the afternoon

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searched by the city police and the guards, soldiers, that had been left behind. The night that the rest of the prisoners were taken out, 22 prisoners escaped. There were 3 of us [REDACTED] and 5 on the burial detail and one group of 4 hid someplace else in the building and they were captured a short time after the other prisoners had taken off. They were machine gunned and buried right there in the school yard. One group of 7 got recaptured and they took them out the next morning and caught up with the main body of prisoners. There were several others that escaped that night but they have not

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been heard from since. The rest of the prisoners were put on a train and headed northward. They never did get but about 25 miles north of Pyongyang during the following week. They went all this time with no food whatsoever according to some of the fellows that actually survived the massacre. On the 21st of October paratroopers were dropped in front of the prisoners, and the North Korean guards realized that they were out off and they turned their machine guns on the prisoners. You probably all heard of the massacre that took place in the railroad tunnel up there. 13 of the prisoners actually survived that were left for dead. However, they never did find but 68 bodies - what happened to the rest of them, we don't know, and we have never heard anything from the other prisoners that had gone on into North Korea ahead of our group.

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We were liberated on October 20th, we came out from [REDACTED] and the next day we were flown back to hospitals in Japan. Out of the original 376 prisoners there are about 45 of us alive today. At the time I was liberated there were 259 American air-men missing in action, from the last figures - this was about the last of October. At the present time, I believe it was about the middle of February, I believe we had 405 missing in action, or 405 casualties, of which 159 were killed in action, some of the remaining 250 were wounded, but it didn't give the exact figures, I am just guessing here, but I would say that at least 100 of this remaining 250 under ordinary

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conditions you could expect them to be prisoners of war. However, it is the general belief, and we believe at the time that I was shot down that all airmen that go down in enemy territory are killed almost immediately upon being captured. Why they decided not to kill me I don't know. There was one T-6 pilot that bailed out in the Southern part of Korea, he had been held prisoner with the group of 35 that I bumped into on the road and marched into Seoul with. They were beating him up pretty badly when they were interrogating him, and he's never been heard from since, and there was also a [REDACTED] that was a prisoner, he was a navigator on a B-29 crew, and we know that he was held prisoner in Seoul for some time before our group arrived, but we don't know what has ever happened to him. The 3 of us are the only 3 airmen that we have any proof of having been held prisoners by the North Koreans. At the present time I am the only Air Force escapee.

I have a couple of things here that might be of interest to you. If you are shot down, if you are captured by the enemy, you will be treated worse and you will be hated worse than ground soldiers. Those people over there really hate pilots because the Air Force is responsible for 75 to 80% of the casualties that the North Koreans have suffered, and our B-29's and fighters have caused more damage and have destroyed more property over there than the ground force has. Therefore, you will be pointed out as being an airman, and if at all possible I

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would certainly try to avoid being captured by those people. If you do happen to be captured, if at all possible escape early while you are still in good physical condition because you will be fed very, very poorly, and after say 30 days time you will be in a very weakened condition. You will have, I would say 75% of you, during 30 days of captivity, will, in all probability have dysentery by that time, and once you get dysentery you are practically done for. I have seen people die within a week after contracting dysentery. Also, you must have a will to survive. A lot of the fellows that died in the group I was in actually gave up. They began to think that they didn't have a chance of escaping. They gave up all hopes of ever being rescued by the ground forces. They actually just almost quit eating and just realized that they had had it and that pretty soon they would kick the bucket. If you will be very careful in what you eat you will be able to scrounge quite a bit of food. I ate raw sweet potatoes and raw white potatoes and green corn out of the fields, but I was very careful in eating anything out of the ground. Those people over there fertilize everything with human manure. You can, at least I did and several of us, eat just the inside of potatoes, and it didn't make us sick, and it didn't give us dysentery. We also scrounged quite a few pumpkins and we ate the inside of them, but don't eat the peeling or rind. Some of the fellows didn't have the willpower to resist eating peelings, and they just ate peelings and everything, and it sure as

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hell made them sick. You can't drink water that drains out of a rice paddy and stay in good health. Sometimes I would go, and several of us that were interested in our welfare, we would go all day long without taking a drink of water unless we could determine that the water was coming from higher ground than a rice paddy. The wells over there are above the level of the rice paddies and you can drink water from a well with a fair degree of safety, or you can drink from a mountain stream, but you cannot drink water from a ditch or from a stream that is draining out of a rice paddy. A lot of the fellows didn't have the willpower to resist taking a drink of water out of a little stream that we would march through, and I would say a large percent of the dysentery that our fellows got was from drinking this water. If you can escape, or if you go down in enemy territory and you are going to walk out, if you can evade, you can't possibly travel during the day because in that part of the world you look so different from those people that you will surely be recognized. I don't think you can possibly disguise yourself well enough to travel any at all during the day. You are going to have to stay in the hills, and even in the hills during the night it is going to be dangerous, and you are going to have to be very very careful because there are so many, or I have found when I was there, so many of their troops hide out in the hills and then come out of the hills during the day, and they go

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back into the hills and spend the night and you are going to have to be very careful how you travel. You probably won't be able to make over maybe 6 or 8 miles a night, but you are going to have to be cautious to avoid bumping into enemy patrols. As is taught here in the school, and I would recommend in Korea or in Russia, don't try to make contact with natives except as a last resort. If you are in a pretty good state of health, if you have some survival equipment, and you can survive and walk towards friendly territory without help, I would strongly advise that you do so. If you do have to make contacts, pick out some lone farmhouse, a long distance from anything else, watch it for maybe 2 or 3 days to make sure there is no traffic going in or out, and then get the old man off in the corner of a field someplace and contact him and see if he will help you. If he would not agree to help you, and if you thought there was danger of him turning you over to the authorities, I think I would kill the son of a b---- and bury him right there and nobody would ever find him. That might sound pretty bad, but you probably don't think much about dropping an atomic bomb and killing thousands and thousands of people, but the first time you ever kill a man like that it will probably be pretty hard for you, but in war killing is killing and if you want to live you will probably have to do some things like that. Of course, if you get caught you can be killed yourself, and it will be perfectly legal, I guess according to the



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International regulations of war, but none of the countries in the Far East and the Russians either for that matter recognise any of the rules of the Geneva Convention, so if it were me I don't think I would worry too much about it. I would just be thinking of trying to get the hell out. It is pretty dangerous to make contacts even in South Korea. The South Koreans are supposed to be our allies, but I know of several groups of ground force boys that were cut off in the hills and they held out in the hills for 6 or 8 days and had no food whatsoever, and up in the hills of Korea there is absolutely no food to be had. Finally they would send a man down to a Korean house to get food and the South Koreans were willing enough to give food, but while they were getting the food ready they would send somebody out and by the time the guy got ready to go back to the hills with the food, why there would be a group of North Korean soldiers there to follow him back. This happened on 2 or 3 occasions, so we found out that we could not even trust the South Koreans. So you can see from this that it is really going to be risky business trying to make contact anywhere in that part of the world.

I have just about used up all the time here, this is about all I have to say. I will be glad to answer any questions that might be in your mind:

Question was asked as to what type of interrogation was to be expected from the North Koreans.

Answer: They, of course, want to know the number of airplanes we have

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in the theatre - B-29's, F-51's and F-80's, and so forth, and the armorment load and questions like that. This business of name, rank and serial number has been thrown out the window in the Far East Air Force Hq, and anything you are forced to say under duress is not held against you, and you cannot get away with just giving your name, rank and serial number in the Far East, with the North Koreans anyway, because they would sure as hell kill you if you said my name is so and so, rank so and so, serial number so and so, and that is all I am going to say. They would shoot you so quick it would make your head swim. If I were an aircraft commander I wouldn't want to have any information concerning anything that I didn't absolutely have to know, and I don't think any crew that flies over enemy territory should have any more information than is absolutely necessary for him to perform that one particular mission.

Question was asked if interrogation was made by Russian officers or by just North Koreans.

Answer: No, while I was in Seoul 3 or 4 Russians came out on 3 or 4 occasions with North Korean high ranking officers, they came through the prison and went through the classrooms and looked us over, but none of the Russians attempted to interrogate us and said nothing. They just looked at us and passed on.

Question was asked if interrogation was made in Korean language.

Answer: No, they will always have interpreters. Quite a few people

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over there speak English, and just about every little detachment of Korean troops there will be somebody who can speak fairly good English.

Nothing else?

Thank you.